

# PARENTS GIVE VARIOUS REASONS FOR APPROVING 'LITTLE RED SCHOOL HOUSE'

By RALPH R. GOMPERTZ

(Editor's note: This is the third in a series of four articles on "the little red school house plan" now being tried with a number of students at Walteria elementary school. The plan calls for placing pupils who would normally be in three different grades (1st, 2nd, and 3rd or 4th, 5th, and 6th) into one classroom for the purpose of instruction. This enables teachers to instruct pupils according to ability in the various subjects rather than according to grade level. It is believed that learning will improve and even increase because of this set-up which, it is stated, permits greater individualized instruction. The idea is meant to combine the merits of the old-fashioned "little red school house" arrangement with the benefits of modern educational techniques and facilities. The plan was developed by Walter Rehboldt, director of instruction for the Torrance Unified School District.)

How do the parents whose children attend the little red

school house (or, mixed) classes at Walteria elementary school feel about these classes so far?

Teachers and school officials have recognized the value of the plan at the very least. A considerable number of them have expressed outright and almost unqualified enthusiasm.

But what about the parents of the 245 children attending these classes? In order to find out how they feel, we made a spot survey, asking 20 of the parents for their opinion.

The dominant reaction of the parents was their strong enthusiasm for the program. The note of enthusiasm was unmistakable in every instance and substantiated by specific examples. Only one mother, who called the Torrance Press, was strongly opposed to the plan, even though her child is in one of these mixed classes.

Parents noticed a number of significant and beneficial effects among those mentioned were the following:

1. A mixed class benefits both the gifted and slower students, as well as the average students.
2. Children show greater enthusiasm to learn.
3. The challenge is greater.
4. Children gain a greater sense of responsibility and kindness.
5. Timid children become more sociable.
6. It helps a child plug up loopholes.
7. Great improvement and increase in learning.
8. Develops helpful attitude.
9. Children grasp ideas more quickly sometimes when they are explained by other children.
10. Prevents boredom.

While most of the parents admitted being slightly apprehensive about the program at first, none of them seemed so now. When asked whether they could detect any potential flaws or weaknesses in the program, parents offered a number of comments, emphasizing however that the ills which they thought could occur might prove to be imaginary ills and that, in most instances, none of them had occurred under the present program. Parents brought up the following considerations along these lines:

1. Will a teacher have enough time for each student's needs?
2. A mixed class might be hard on a particularly timid child.
3. The success of this program depends to a great degree on the teacher. While offering a greater challenge, it also appears to be more demanding.
4. Younger pupils might feel inadequate as they realize how far ahead of them the older ones are—the challenge might seem too great.
5. If the present classes are discontinued, then all the advantages gained by these students will be lost when they return to a single level classroom.
6. Pupils may not receive as much individualized attention as they should have in some specialized fields.
7. Younger children mix too soon with older pupils socially which may be undesirable if the older ones happens to be the "wrong bunch."
8. The top group of pupils may not be given the same challenge that the other students are offered.
9. One mother, mentioned previously, who called the Torrance Press but who wished to remain anonymous, complained because her youngster was studying a fourth grade subject while he was supposed to be in the fifth grade. He was studying fifth grade subjects in every other respect. Thus, she argued, he will always be one grade behind in this particular subject and will not be able to do the work expected of him on his particular level. The mother felt that more rigid demands should be made of the children. While mixed classes are strictly voluntary she didn't want to take her child out of the class.

Parents also had different reasons for enrolling their youngsters in a mixed class. Among those mentioned were the following:

1. The parents themselves (mother, father, or both) went to school in a "real" little red school house and they liked the method.
2. Parents felt that more attention would be paid to the individual needs of the child.
3. A teacher recommended the class.
4. They felt that these classes would receive the greatest amount of attention — although they were advised and convinced since then that other classes would receive just as much attention because both teachers realize that their classes will be compared.
5. Respect for advice of educators who spend much time studying these ideas before they ever try to put them into practice.

Here are some of the remarks made by the parents themselves: (pupil's "official" grade will be listed for the sake of comparison, although all students are in mixed classes):

- Mrs. Jack H. French, 3345 Winlock dr. (boy, 3rd grade): "Doing beautifully . . . especially enjoys helping first graders . . . the program benefits both gifted and slow children."
- Mrs. J. Bradford John, 3303 Newton st.: "I am very pleased . . . my son seems to be much more enthusiastic . . . I do wonder if this plan gives teachers enough time to help each pupil."
- Mrs. Elsworth Pau, 24809 Winlock dr. (boy, 2nd grade):

daughter, 4th grade): "We're real pleased with it—we've noticed progress, especially in our daughter. She's sparked with enthusiasm trying to keep up with the upper grade. The teacher's enthusiasm helped us to decide on a mixed class. My husband also liked the idea—he was brought up in a country school."

Mrs. Robert S. Cramer, 24240 Los Codona (boy, 3rd grade): "We're very pleased . . . he has developed a greater appreciation for younger children . . . and a sense of responsibility. . . Selection and training of the teacher is the secret of success for such a program, I believe."

Mrs. P. Stagner, 3880 Newton st. (boy, 3rd grade): "He's more enthusiastic about his school work now and takes more pride in helping others."

Mrs. William Moss, 3792 Newton st. (boy, 6th grade): "We're crazy about it . . . he is overlapping into sixth grade . . . the plan gives a chance to move ahead . . . we decided on it on recom-

mendation of one of his teachers . . . I thought that a timid child might become too self-conscious among older children."

Mrs. Thomas Fitzpatrick, 3321 Danaha st. (boy, 6th grade; boy, 4th grade; girl, 1st grade): "We're pleased . . . one of the boys is picking up what he missed earlier . . . the other one is profiting socially by being with older children and also by being looked up to as an example. I've been wondering if the youngest one might feel a bit inadequate when she sees that 2nd and 3rd graders are doing better work."

Mrs. E. A. Strong, 24438 Ward st. (boy, 3rd grade): "It's working out fine . . . he seems to be more interested this year."

Mrs. Charles A. Vosper, 3232 Dalemead (3 boys, 1st, 2nd, 3rd grade): "Lot of improvement . . . I was raised in a one-room school house . . . lot's of times we've wanted to take the children back to such a system . . . Only thing I'd worry about is that the classes wouldn't be continued next year. The children would lose what they had gained."

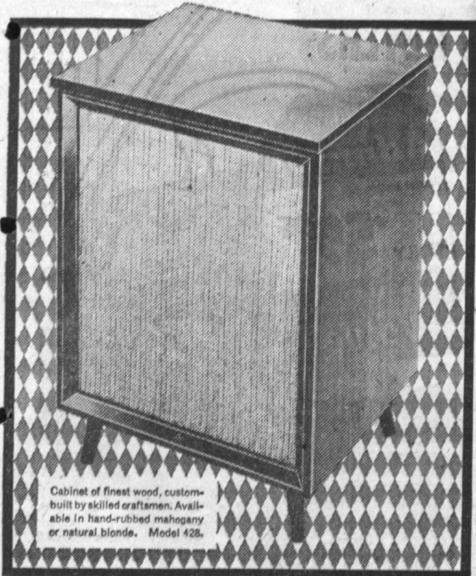
Mrs. William Addington, 3526 Madison court (girl, 3rd grade; boy, 5th grade): "The girl is a born 'helper-outer'—she loves to help out in the lower grades . . . Haven't noticed too much change in the boy . . . Possible weakness—children might not get as much individual attention in some special fields."

Mrs. Bruce Richardson, 3310 Dalemead (boy, 5th grade; girl

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## Man Hurt

Herman B. Field, 40, of 616 E. Carson st., Torrance, fell 12 feet off a scaffold at Harey Aluminum Monday, breaking his right foot and damaging the heel, officials disclosed.

Field was employed by Charles A. Langlis co., and Hatzel and Buehler co., electrical contractors working on the Harvey Aluminum expansion project.

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## Jaycees Seek Outstanding Young Man

Mayor Albert Isen has proclaimed January 14-21, 1956, as "Junior Chamber of Commerce" week in Torrance, and asked local organizations to co-operate in the observance.

He said the purpose of the week is to focus attention on young men and the work they are doing.

Harry L. Klinger, jr., local Jaycee chairman, said that a highlight of the week's events will be the presentation of a distinguished service award key and plaque to Torrance's outstanding young man who has made an outstanding contribution to our community.

During the Jaycee week observance here, the U. S. Junior Chamber of Commerce will recognize the Ten Outstanding Young Men of America for 1955, at a banquet in Springfield, Illinois. A past winner of this award, Richard Nixon, vice-president of the United States, will join with Hugh F. McKenna, U. S. Jaycee president, in making the presentations.

The National Jaycee organization has been organized since January 21, 1920, as the result of one Henry Geissenbier who saw a need for a young man's civic group and organized the first chapter in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1915.

Built on the solid foundation of creating opportunities for leadership training through community betterment projects, the Jaycees today, 200,000 strong, are active in 2,900 communities in the United States and are organized in 60 countries through Junior Chamber International.

Anyone interested in nominating the young man of their choice may do so by filling out a nomination blank. Blanks may be obtained at the Chamber of Commerce building, 1345 El Prado, Torrance.

## Trash And Rubbish

Burning hours in Torrance are between 6 and 10 in the morning. It is illegal to burn leaves and rubbish in incinerators. Rubbish is picked up regularly by city crews or it may be taken to the city dump on Madrona north of Torrance blvd. No fee is charged Torrance residents.

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